

What is the birth control shot?

Often called Depo Provera or Depo, it is a shot you get in your arm or butt every three months to prevent pregnancy.

How does it work?

The shot contains the hormone progestin, which stops your ovaries from releasing eggs and prevents you from getting pregnant.

How effective is it?

Perfect Use: Less than 1% of women who use the shot perfectly (they get all their shots on time) will get pregnant in a year.

Typical Use: About 6% of all women who use the shot will get pregnant in a year.

When is it safe to have sex after starting the birth control shot?

If the birth control shot is started within 7 days of the start of a normal period, the shot will protect you right away from pregnancy. Otherwise, use a backup method such as condoms or don't have sexual intercourse for 7 days after getting the shot.

The birth control shot does not protect against sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Always use a condom to protect yourself from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

What will my periods be like while using the birth control shot?

For most women, the shot will make their periods stop after six to nine months of continued use (This means that you have received two to three shots on time.). Not having a period is safe and expected — the hormone in the shot keeps the lining of the uterus very thin so there is no monthly bleeding.

Birth Control Shot



What are the benefits of the birth control shot?

- Very effective birth control method
- Easy to use: You only need to remember to get the shot every 3 months.
- Reversible
- Many women have very light or no bleeding
- Private:
- No one knows you are using birth control.
- Almost no drug interaction concerns
- May be used by breastfeeding women
- No estrogen, if estrogen is a concern

What if I want to stop using the birth control shot or want to get pregnant?

You can stop the birth control shot at any time. If you don't want to get pregnant right away, you should switch to another birth control method by 13 weeks after your last shot. Women who want to get pregnant may not get pregnant for as long as 10 months after stopping the shot.

What are common side effects from the birth control shot?

Side effects can include irregular spotting or bleeding, weight gain, depression, headache and reversible decreased bone density. Bone density starts to go back to the level it was before the shot when the birth control shot is stopped. Getting enough Calcium and Vitamin D through diet or supplements and doing weight bearing exercises is important for healthy bones.

What if I'm late getting a shot?

The birth control shot prevents pregnancy for 13 weeks. If it has been more than 15 weeks since your last shot, your health care provider will want to be reasonably sure you are not pregnant before giving you your next shot. Your provider may offer you emergency contraception if you have had unprotected intercourse during the past 5 days. Use a backup method such as condoms or don't have sex until you get your next shot and for 7 days after getting your shot. Your provider may also recommend that you have a follow up pregnancy test in 2 to 3 weeks after getting your shot.

Warning Signs:

Call the clinic immediately if you have:

- Severe headache
- Severe lower abdominal pain
- New problems with your eyesight, like blurry vision or seeing spots
- Heavy bleeding that lasts longer than a normal period
- Signs that you might be pregnant